

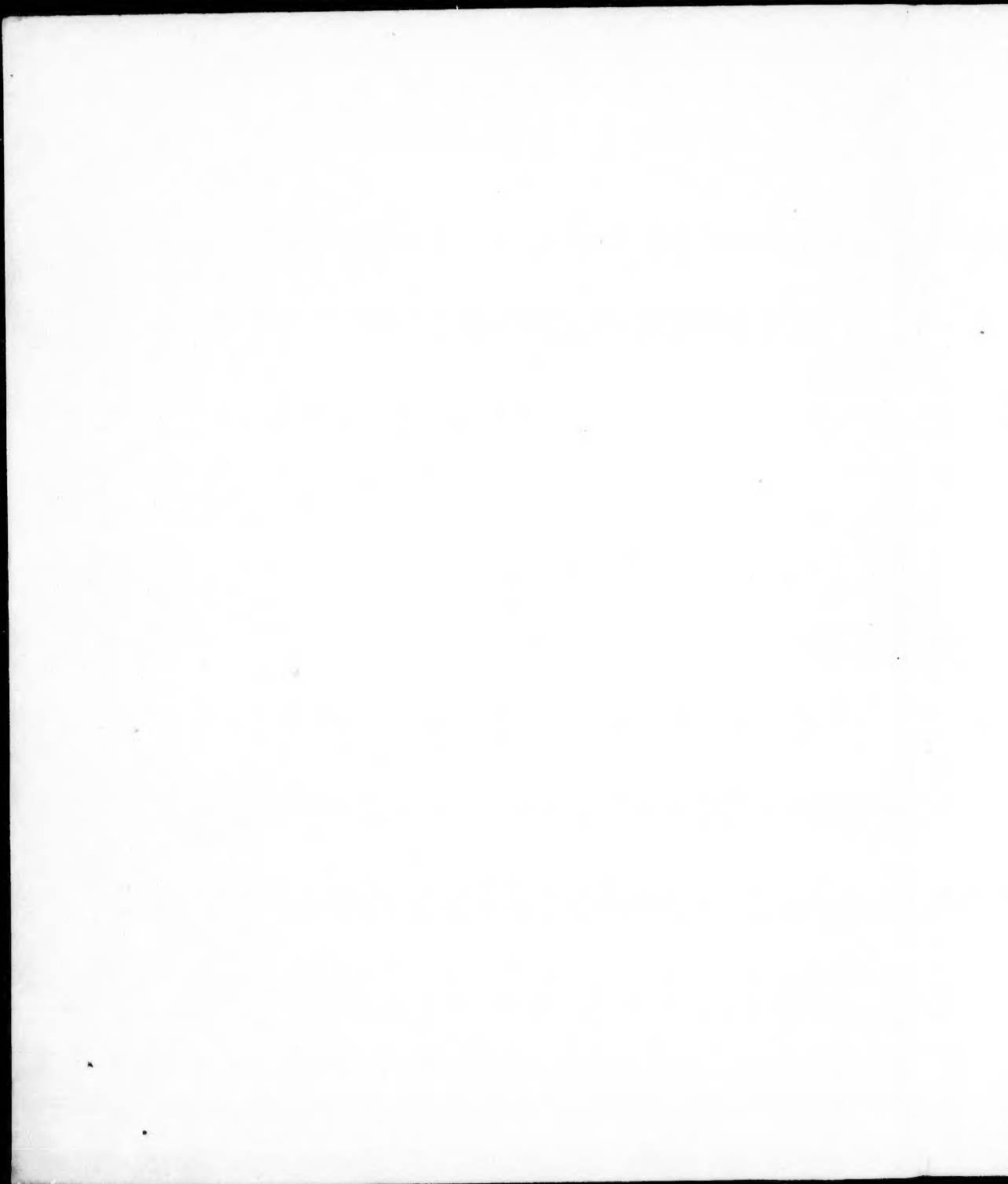
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SPRIGS O' HEATHER

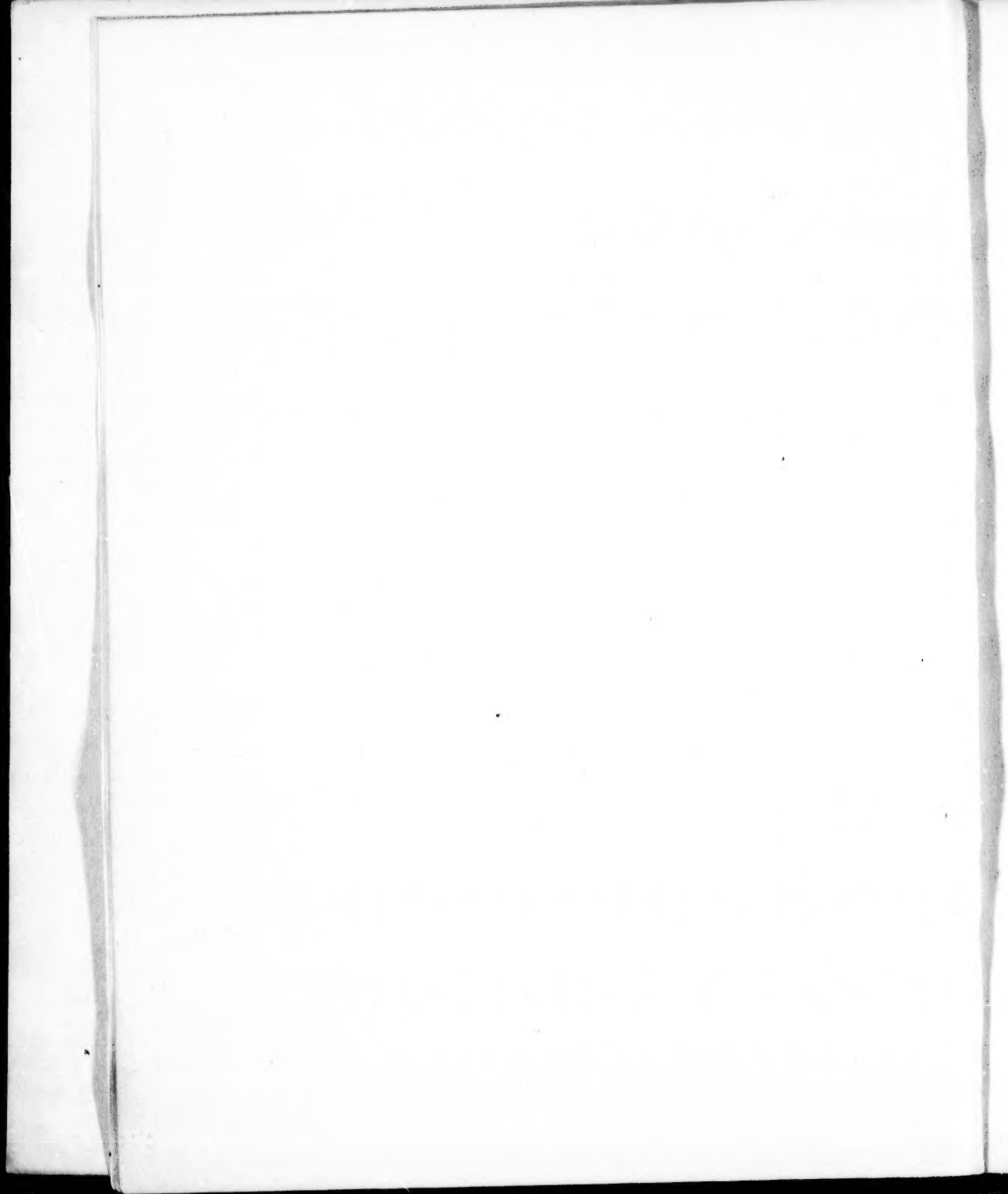
For...
Scottish...
Gatherings, —

BY

THOMAS LAIDLAW.



W. B. James
Feb 4/95



SPRIGS O' HEATHER

For Scottish Gatherings,

BY

THOMAS LAIDLAW.



St. Andrew's nicht! "tae Scotland yet"
Are kindly greetings paid,
And will be, as she duncely sits
Wrapt in "her auld grey plaid."

GUELPH :

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*To the President and Members of St. Andrew's
Society, Guelph.*

GENTLEMEN :

"Sprigs o' Heather for Scottish Gatherings" were written for and read on different occasions at the Annual Gatherings of the Guelph St. Andrew's and Caledonian Societies, for which I have had the honor of being chosen to the office of Bard for years in succession—an honor which I have ever truly appreciated. The last piece in the collection was read before the Guelph Gaelic Society, who, in recognition of my very humble merits as a writer of English verse, kindly elected me an honorary member.

It is unlikely that I will ever again, even in imagination, climb the hills of my native land in quest of "Sprigs o' Heather for Scottish Gatherings," therefore, I have taken what I have gathered and tenderly bound them together into one united bunch. Each individual sprig has, to me, some pleasant memory of a time when in quest of it I was wafted in abstraction, for awhile, across the deep blue sea to hills and glens that were echoing from "curlews calling through a cloud and whistling plover."

In this collected form they are now respectfully dedicated to St. Andrew's Society,

By the Author,

THOMAS LAIDLAW.

Pa
P
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CM

ODE—ST. ANDREW'S DAY.

TO Scotland's rugged strand
Our hearts would homage pay,
And with affection leal and true,
We muse on hills and bonnets blue
On this her natal day.

Unique her witching lore,
Impressed on hill and dale ;
Through silent glens let fancy rove
Where hoary age her legends wove—
A weird romantic tale.

Her sea girt shores resist
The wild waves sullen swell,
And dashing from the mountains high
The torrents rush to lochs that lie
Fringed round with heather bell.

Across her bleak hill sides,
White flecked with fleecy flocks,
Up from the sea the sun is borne,
Through cloud and mist, when blushing morn
Shines forth with dripping locks.

Adown her silent glens
Are homes of virtue rare ;
Go enter 'neath that low thatched roof
And learn of Scotland's warp and woof—
Her "Big ha' Bible's" there.

Her grand old ducal seats,
In woods of beauty hid,
And ruins, through whose silent halls,
And arches rent, the moonbeam falls—
The builders with the dead.

The land is classic ground,
Its scenes with memories throng,
Where genius, with her magic pen,
Has lustered every hill and glen
And wove in deathless song.

Her fields where heroes bled !
Her glens where youth and age !
Their grand old psalms rolled to the hills
From troubled souls, whose sorrow fills
Her history's brightest page.

O ! martyrs to the faith !
With patriots true and just !
We write your names in letters tipt
With gold, and be they ever kept
And held in sacred trust.

We hold it solemn truth,
Deny the claim who may,
To struggles in those mournful years—
Those conflicts waged in blood and tears—
We owe a debt to-day.

The rights our fathers won
Are ours in trust to guard ;
Rights won by valiant men and true,
Beneath their spotless banner blue,
With fearless flashing sword.

ST. ANDREW'S DAY.

To-day we live like men
Who act as conscience will,
Our souls rejoice in freedom's light,
Our laws in guardianship of right
Their majesty fulfil.

Our father's land we love
The land of gallant men—
Long may they tread her hills and vales
In freedom, as the eagle sails
Around the lofty "Ben."

In senate hall, or on
The field in martial might,
Be ever this her battle cry—
To this let every heart reply
As one—God and our Right.

THE OLD SCOTTISH SONGS.

O SING us to-night from the Old Scottish
songs—

The songs which our mothers would hear
In the old cottage homes, that were covered with
thatch,
In a land that will ever be dear.

To the true Scottish heart they feelingly speak,
As they waft us in spirit away
To the great moon-lit glens, with their deep hazel
dens
And the “ Bens ” that are prouder than they.

To the green margined burn, wimpling far up the
strath,
To the moors with their red heather bells,
Where the lone curlews cry till the echoes reply,
Where nature in solitude dwells.

And out from the stream, and beyond the thatched
roofs,

The Kirk of our fathers appears,
'Tis the auld parish Kirk looking grey through the
mirk

And embalmed with the memories of years.

And we stroll up the glen, past the quaint water-
mill,

And round by the old castle tower
Enshrouded with mystery, of ghost, troubled
history,

And lonely at night's witching hour.

With the sweet-scented gowan the meadows are
gemmed,

And the lark sings its song from the sky,
All nature rejoices, and the hills have the voices
Of freedom that never will die.

In the days of unrest, when the land was in gloom,
And the godly their Zion bewailed,
When the hunters of men searched the soul-
stricken glen,
And the heart of the truest had quailed.

To the hills then they looked for the spirit and
power
To strike from oppression the rod,
Nor were they denied as they fought as they died
For the Kirk and their covenant God.

Yes, the spirit that stemmed the invasion that
sought
To wrest from the kingdom its crown,
That spirit untamed down the ages has flamed
With untarnished, unsullied renown.

Dear land of the wild rugged mountain and glen,
With a spirit that dares to be free,
We rejoice in the fame that enlustres your name,
And the worth that is centred in thee.

Then sing us to-night from the old Scottish songs—

The songs which our mothers would hear

In the old cottage homes that were covered with
thatch,

In a land that will ever be dear.

songs—

ed with

IN MEMORY
OF DAVID KENNEDY, THE DISTINGUISHED
SCOTTISH VOCALIST.

DIED AT STRATFORD, ONTARIO, OCTOBER 13TH, 1886.

TO-NIGHT we lift the minstrel harp,
 With tears of sorrow wet,
And strike with reverent hand its chords
 To wailings of regret.
We strike in numbers sad and low,
 And dirgeful notes prolong ;
We mourn to-night for one who reigned
 A prince of Scottish song.

His songs were fragrant with the breath
 Of broom and heather bells,
They echoed to the murmuring streams
 And music of the dells ;

He brought auld Scottish scenes to view,
As if by magic wand ;
We loved him ! O, " a nicht at hame "
With Kennedy was grand.

The sighs and vows that lovers breathe
Were sacred in his hands,
He wove them into garlands rare,
Entwined with vestal bands ;
And honest worth more noble seemed,
As with exultant swell
He sang how independent minds
All other minds excel.

With all the bearing of a prince
To front with battle brought,
He grandly sang of honoured fields
By Scottish valor fought.
He held us, as he seemed to rend
Tyrannic chains with scorn,
And led us with him as he soared
On wing of freedom borne.

He sketched the lore of Scottish song
With true perceptive art ;
His stories, with a wondrous power,
Revealed the human heart.
Now tender, pawky, shrewd and wise,
Anon with humor rife,
As told by him with unction rare,
Were true to Scottish life.

His voice had stirred the flagging soul,
And rapturous plaudits won
In every clime, in wintry zones,
Or 'neath the tropic's sun.
And in our land, whose shores again
His welcome foot had prest,
Expectance reigned in every heart,
The heart to joy confessed.

Alas for hope ! within yon room
The Scottish minstrel lies,
Where weeping friends close round his bed
And breathe their burdened sighs.

•

Hand clasps with hand, in kind farewell,
Lips tender words convey,
While soul-lit eyes with touching glance
Say more than words can say.

He breathes a wish to hear that hymn,
"The Rock of Ages cleft,"
Friends in that deeply solemn hour
Their trembling voices lift.
The dying minstrel feebly joins,
Yet sings in faith and love,
Yet while he sings, his spirit soars
To sing the song above.

Yet though on earth his voice was hushed,
And on a foreign strand,
His dust is in the auld kirk yard
And in his native land ;
Amid the scenes of which he sang,
Of which he was a part,
Where on his grave the lark doth rain
The music of its heart.

Ye autumn winds that drift the lea
 With heavily burdened sigh ;
Ye limpid streams that gently flow
 Beneath a leaden sky,
In concert sing with muffled voice,
 And join ye woodland throng
In liquid notes, for one who reigned,
 A Prince of Scottish song.

SCOTIA'S THISTLE.

THIS INCIDENT IS SAID TO HAVE OCCURRED AT THE BATTLE
OF LARGS IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY, WHEN THE
DANES INVADED SCOTLAND.

SCOTIA'S Thistle, honored gem,
To-night we round your rugged stem
A wreath of laurel bind ;
Your fame would date, as legends say,
From time remote, now dim and grey,
And down the years through feud and fray
In loyal hearts enshrined,
And we awhile to-night would scan
The scene whereon your fame began.

The mist of years rests thick between
The present and the distant scene ;
Yet fancy sheds a ray of light
Across that legendary night,
As camped upon the heath there lay
The Scots at rest awaiting day ;

Nor had a thought foreboding ill,
All nature seemed serene and still,
Save when in gusts the wind would pass
To shake the waste and withered grass,
Or from the bleak adjacent hill
The bark of fox, heard sharp and shrill,
Yet neither wakeful eye nor ear
Would say a foe was lurking near.

Yet foe there was—Danes stout and bold,
Sea rovers in the days of old—
Lurked in the gloom, their scouts ahead
With ear intent and stealthy tread,
Shot through the night an eagle eye
A point of vantage to espy—
Some place less guarded to assail,
To strike and by surprise prevail.
With bated breath they grope their way
Barefooted, lest their steps betray,
With crouching form, till in arrest
A foot is on a Thistle prest ;
Its cruel jags the wrong resent—
A shriek throughout the darkness went—

A shriek the imprecating yell
At once on the encampment fell ;
Each Scot shook off his slumber light,
And in an instant stood upright—
An instant held the scene in view,
Then grasped his blade with courage true,
And out beneath the star-lit sky
He rushed with yell and battle cry ;
Wild as the torrent's maddened leap
Adown the rugged mountain steep,
So rushed the Scots, the Danes opposed,
And Scot with Dane in combat closed.
Their reeking blades life's current drank,
Down to the dust the victims sank ;
Until beneath the potent sway
Of Scottish swords the Danes gave way,
And routed on the field in flight
They sought the darkness of the night.

With vigour on the trampled heath
The Scots did win the victor's wreath,
And as the pale-rayed level sun
Lit up the field their valor won,

In justice to ascribe a meed
Of honor to a timely deed,
 They hailed the Thistle then
In fealty and with honor due,
While ages roll, the emblem true,
 Of Scotland hill and glen.

Fit choice and meet, so full replete
 With rugged stem and jag ;
We in our emblem do rejoice
And shout, with an united voice,
Long may the Thistle wag.

INVITATION TO THE NATIONAL GAMES.

RESPECTED friens frae North the Tweed,
Wha loe the Thistle weel,
Time aye keeps spinning at her thread
Tae wind it on her reel.
Another year has come and gane
Tae others that hae been,
Since last we met tae haud our games
And dances on the green.

And now again ye'll come away
And leave your happy hames,
And gladly gie another day
Tae Scotland and her games ;
The men that for their richts would dee
And dare tyrannic steel,
May yet unbend tae mirth and glee
And laud the Tulloch reel.

O ! how the heart tae rapture wakes,
How stirred our Scottish veins,
When tartans wave and pibrochs break
In wildly thrilling strains.
In fancy, landscapes break in view
With heather, broom and whins,
With silent glens and mountains blue,
And foaming, rushing linns.

We lightly tread the heather bell,
We hear the plover's cry,
We see the auld kirk in the dell
Where round our fathers lie.
We wander classic scenes amang
Where genius flung her spell
Frae magic pen, since Ossian sang
Of Fingal's deeds tae tell.

Braw lads will come with blooming belles,
And fock grown frail and auld,
Wha'll crack o' deeds they did themsels
When they were young and yauld.
And aye will break upon the ear,
Tae swell owre hill and dale,
The pibrochs of the mountaineer—
The music of the Gael.

Come ye that with a loving ken,
 The rose and shamrock place
 Sae kindly in your warmest ben,
 That years may not efface.
 About ourselves we needna brag,
 But meet ye as our peers,
 And hail with you the noble flag
 That's braved a thousand years.

As one our fathers side by side
 Hae aft combatted wrang,
 Their stirring words in echoes wide
 Resounding loud and lang,
 And pressing on they focht and bled,
 And dee'd ere they would yield,
 Ae common grave contains our dead
 On many a bloody field.

Come, come away ye'll welcome hae,
 Come ilka race and tongue,
 Whate'er newfangled fock may say,
 We're a' frae Adam sprung.

An honest heart, a kindly e'e
Break down partitions thin,
Ae spark o' nature flashing free
Makes a' the world kin.

Forbid, a jar should ever mar
This pleasing, happy rhyme,
For proudly we would thread with thee
The mazy stream of time,
And scatter free the kindly seeds
Of love that winna blight,
And in our banner weave the threads
Of honor, truth and right.

Come, come away, ye'll welcome hae,
Come a' if ye be spared;
What need tae say a summer day
Though lang is richly wared.
Come ane and a'! baith great and small
Frae clansman tae the chief,
And swell acclaim tae Scotland's fame
And cheer the Maple Leaf.

"QUIT YOU LIKE MEN."

(1st Cor. 16 : 13.)

BROTHERS—men God's image bearing
Nobly walking, brow erect—
Men, God's lovingkindness sharing
Should ye fail in self-respect?
Men endowed with gift of reason—
Men of conscience, mind and will
Time is an important season,
In it you've a place to fill—
Quit ye like men !

Be not slaves to sinful passion,
Cleanse your skirts and keep from stain ;
Be not lured by empty fashion,
Unsubstantial light and vain ;
Rise to manhood's truer bearing,
Sinful habits blight and sere,
In the conflict be ye daring,
Let the proudling taunt and sneer—
Quit ye like men !

Live and act that in an audit
You may court the clearest light,
Pleased if ye may win the plaudit
Of a conscience just and right ;
Mean and base is he that reckons
On the gain that wrong may buy,
Follow ye where honor beckons,
Listen to her clarion cry—
Quit ye like men !

Never lose the pure and holy
Lessons that we learned in youth ;
Leave the sceptic with his folly
Rather than compromise truth ;
Seek the truth in all its beauty,
Cling to all that's good and pure,
Never swerve nor shrink from duty,
Never ye your faith abjure—
Quit ye like men !

Yes, be men—be true and upright,
Quit the fogs that lead astray,
Rising to the purer sunlight
Of a clearer, better day—
Rising to completer union
With diviner, holier things,
It is yours to seek communion
Even with the King of Kings—
Quit ye like men !

